

Sunday November 12th sermon: "The Priesthood of Believers – A Royal Priesthood (Pt 2)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,  
by John Pittman Hey

1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 5:9-10

We have spoken previously of other sacrifices and usurping false priests who offer them.

But God has provided His people with offerings and spiritual sacrifices and gifts of worship and praise and obedience to Him, and has expressed His delight in receiving them from His people.

None of these offerings are for sin – only the sacrifice made by Christ of His Own body and blood were made for our sin. There are no other sin offerings, and there is no other high priest to make a sin offering except Jesus.

Rather, the spiritual sacrifices God has given to His people to return to Him in worship and praise, are our response to Christ's sole sacrifice for our sin.

Which raises the question, what is our position in making such offerings by the power of Christ unto our God?

Scripture declares that God has made all believers priests to Himself!

We are never to offer Him sin offerings, but only spiritual sacrifices of peace and praise and worship because He saved us.

In olden times, God told the people of Israel that if they obeyed His commandments, He would make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The people declared they would do all that God commanded them.

But before forty days had passed, they made a golden calf and descended into obscene idolatry, with Aaron himself helping them turn against God.

After that, no longer was all of Israel a kingdom of priests. Rather, the priesthood was limited to the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron.

Anyone else who approached unto the altar to make a sacrifice would be destroyed. Only the high priest could appear before the mercy seat, only once a year, and only with the blood of a sin offering.

Isaiah lamented at the corruption of the people, the blood on their hands, and the contempt that God expressed for their sacrifices and their religious rituals.

But in Malachi 3, there is a hint that the way to the altar would be widened, when Messiah came to purify the sons of Levi. Then they too would be able to offer sacrifices in Righteousness!

When Jesus came, and purified His people by His atoning blood sacrifice, He brought strangers nigh unto God, joining all His people together in One.

Now we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints! Now we are built into the very spiritual temple of God, wherein He dwells by His Spirit, and wherein we who had been barred as strangers from the altar, make our spiritual sacrifices to God!

But still further, Peter informs us that we who were nobodies, are now made royal priests, fit to offer spiritual sacrifices! These sacrifices are our praise and worship and thanksgiving and deeds of charity in Jesus' name.

Hebrews tells us that, because of the blood of Jesus that has purged our sin, we can have boldness to enter into the Holiest of Holies of Heaven, coming before God's glory through the veil of Christ's sacrificed body.

Indeed, a priest must have something to sacrifice to God. The Aaronic priesthood had its animal offerings, which could never take away sin.

Therefore Christ, appointed our priest by God's oath forever after the order of Melchizedek, had to have a different sacrifice to offer up, which was His Own body and blood.

Therefore, if believers are to be priests of God, we must have an offering to make, not for sin, because that is the sacrifice that our high priest, Jesus, has already made.

We dare not pretend to usurp Christ's priesthood by thinking we can offer sacrifices for sin – this is the blasphemy of the Romanist so-called "priests."

No, our sacrifice and offerings must be different from Aaron's, which could not take away sin, and our sacrifices must be different from Christ's, whose sacrifice of His Own body and blood took away our sin.

God has assigned to believer priests offerings different from Aaron's and Christ's – He has ordained our offerings of worship, and praise, and thanksgiving, and obedience, and kindness to each other.

God has told us that with those sacrifices, made by His believer priests, He is well pleased!

Thus we see the perversion of the false sacrifices for sin offered by the Romanists in their Mass. They overthrow Christ's exclusive one-time sin offering, and thereby pollute the offerings of their communicants, transforming them into gross rituals and a damning works salvation scheme, all of which is noxious and blasphemous to our God.

Under Christ's rule, our offerings to God are not for our sins, but rather because Christ has taken away our sins, and made us pure and fit to be priests before our holy God.

Christ has refined us, being poor sinners, and like Levi of old, He has by Himself purged us of all unrighteousness, that we might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness!

Perhaps the most beautiful expression of this truth is found in Revelation 5, where the saints cry out in worship before God, about the glories of the Lamb that was slain, and how He has redeemed us to God by His blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God!

All the glory for this astounding turn of events goes to our God and to the Lamb that was slain!

Every Lord's Day, we exercise our priesthood as believers around His Table. We declare the glory of our Savior's death, and give unto our God praise and thanksgiving for what He has done to save us, and the great price that Christ Alone has paid!